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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DRL/MLGA LYNN SICADE AND IO/RHS AMY
OSTERMEIER

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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA CONCERNED THAT USG DECISION ON UNHRC
PREMATURE

REF: STATE 61034

¶1. On June 12, Emboff informed MFA Minister Plenipotentiary and EU Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) Chair Smiljana Knez of the USG decision to disengage from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) per reftel. Knez said that Slovenia and COHOM regret the U.S. decision and believe that it is too early to determine that the UNHCR is broken beyond repair. She noted that the U.S. is a very important player in the field of human rights and that Slovenia and others need like-minded partners such as the U.S. to ensure that the UNHRC serves as an instrument for promoting human rights.

¶2. Knez stated that Slovenia and COHOM are aware that the UNHCR agenda is not balanced, especially in light of standing agenda items on issues such as the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Knez asserted, however, that in the view of Slovenia and COHOM, more time is needed to reform the UNHCR from within. She stated that Slovenia believes the reform process has just begun and that with the first substantial UNHCR session having just occurred in March and the first Universal Periodic Review session in April, it is too soon to judge the long-term effectiveness of the Council. Knez asserted that after a low point in June 2007, when the Council decided to eliminate mandates on Cuba and Belarus and established a permanent agenda item on Israel, the atmosphere has improved. She pointed to successful actions on Burma and Zimbabwe as evidence that the UNHCR can serve a useful purpose.

¶3. Knez stressed that despite Slovenia's and COHOM's disappointment in the disengagement of the U.S. from the UNHCR, they look forward to close cooperation with the U.S. on human rights within the context of the UN Third Committee.

She noted that the USG decision will be discussed at the next COHOM meeting on June 27.

GHAFARI